

# Vermont Environmental Report

## HYDROPOWER IS LURCHING FORWARD

Although only one site is under construction and several others are tied up in time-consuming reviews before the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission in Washington, D.C., -- the development of hydropower in Vermont is lurching forward.

According to officials at the Public Service Board in Montpelier, hydropower from all sources, in-state and out-of-state, supplies 41 percent of Vermont's electrical needs today. As much as 28.5 percent of this hydropower comes from the Power Authority of the State of New York (PASNY). Another 2.0 percent comes from Hydro Quebec. The rest, 10.7 percent is hydropower from Vermont resources.

Before construction or enlargement of a hydropower station may proceed, a utility, coop, municipal, or citizens group must pass two stages of review with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). The first stage is a preliminary permit that gives the applicant exclusive rights for up to three years to conduct field studies to determine the engineering and economic feasibility of a given site. The second stage is an application for a formal operating license to run a hydro station.

Over the past three years in particular, private utilities, municipals, coops and citizens groups have been examining the reactivation of old hydro sites, the conversion of existing flood control dams to hydro uses, and the construction of entirely new hydropower stations.

Until recently, there has been virtually no construction or enlargement of hydro sites in Vermont -- not since the 1950's. About two weeks ago the first actual construction of a hydro site in over 20 years began at the Great Falls hydro station on the Passumpsic River. When completed, as early as the spring of 1979, the new, enlarged facility will generate 1350 kw of power. The enlargement of the Great Falls site is being constructed by the Lyndonville Electric Light Department at a cost of \$1.1 million.

As you will see from the map on page 2 of this issue, at least 30 hydropower sites in Vermont are under some kind of study or review. Some sites are being considered informally. Some sites have been proposed for a preliminary permit to the FERC. Some sites have been granted preliminary permits and are undergoing engineering and economic feasibility studies.

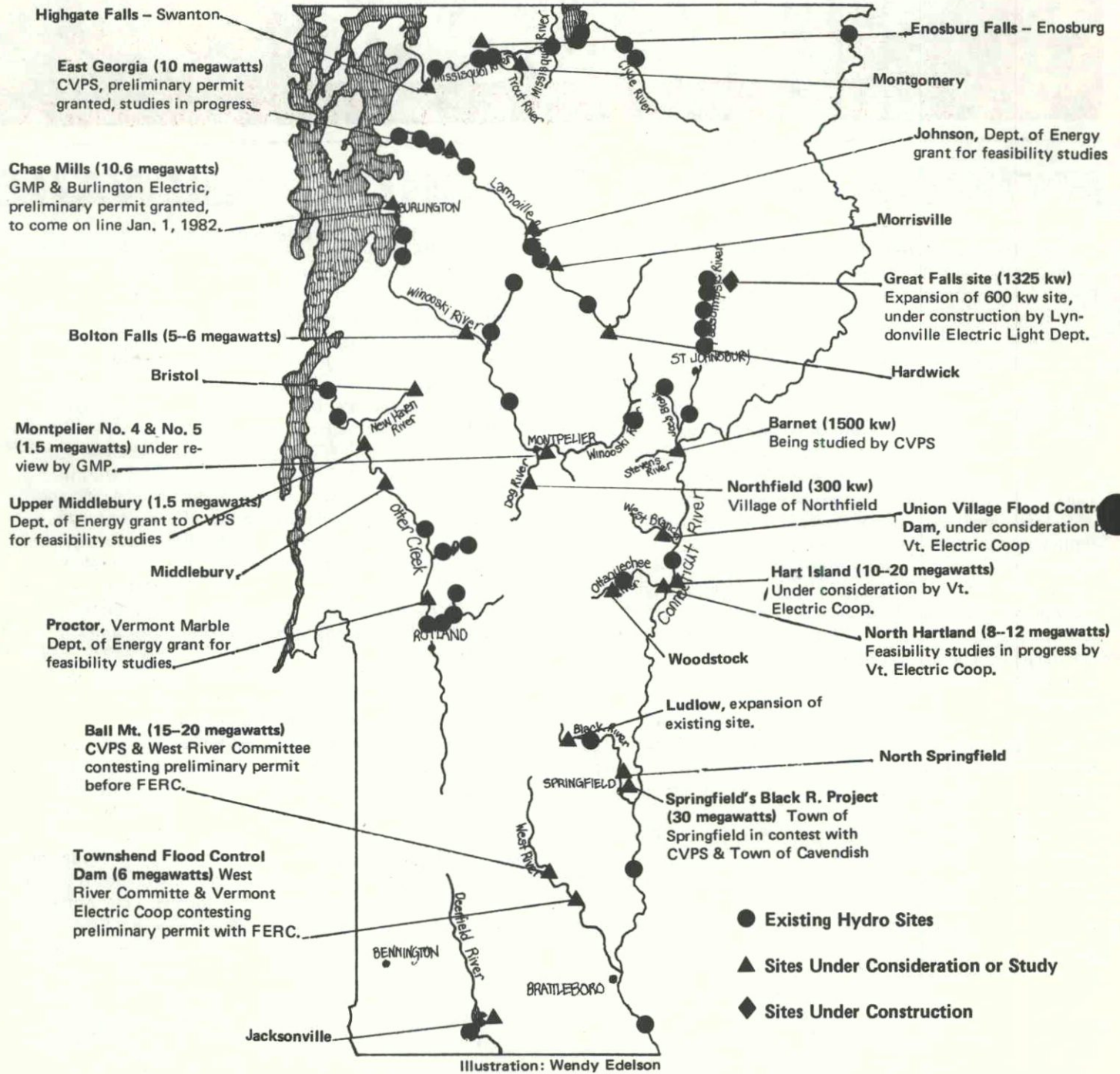
The Central Vermont Public Service Corporation (CVPS) and the Green Mountain Power Company (GMP) report that they have been conducting a review of hydro sites within their franchised areas over the past few years. CVPS has identified four sites where studies are either going forward or will go forward if preliminary permit applications before FERC are approved. These sites are: East Georgia on the Lamoille River; Ball Mountain on a tributary of the West River; Middlebury on Otter Creek; and Barnet on the Stevens River. GMC is reviewing sites on the Winooski River near Montpelier. GMP is also collaborating with the Burlington Electric Department to conduct engineering and economic feasibility studies to develop a hydro station at Chase Mills on the lower Winooski, near Burlington. The Vermont Electric Coop in Johnson has filed for a preliminary permit to examine a hydropower site on Hart Island on the Connecticut River south of White River Junction. The Coop is also studying the hydro potential of a site at North Hartland.

Citizens groups have also been active. In southern Vermont, 12 towns have banded together to form a West River Basin Energy Committee. The Committee has filed for a preliminary permit to study the feasibility of hydropower at Ball Mountain and at the Townshend flood control dam. These applications are in direct conflict with permit applications being filed with FERC by CVPS and the Vermont Electric Coop. In Brattleboro, a citizens committee appointed by the Selectmen is investigating the possibility of challenging the relicensing of the Vernon Dam, presently operated by the New England Power Company. In Middlesex, a committee appointed by the Town to study hydropower, has filed with FERC for permission to intervene in the licensing proceedings involving the Middlesex Gorge Dam, presently being operated by GMP without a formal license. And in Springfield, in perhaps the most widely celebrated case of citizen action for hydropower -- the Springfield Board of Selectmen with approval of the voters, is proposing a \$57 million, six-dam, hydroelectric project on the Black River. Here, too, there is a contest, between Springfield and CVPS, and between Springfield and the nearby Town of Cavendish. □

Map of Vermont Hydro Resources, please turn to page 2.



# VERMONT HYDRO RESOURCES



At the present time, complete information on all the prospective hydropower sites in Vermont is not available. The Vermont Public Service Board is just beginning a three-year study of all hydropower sites in the state. When the Public Service Board inventory is completed, the gaps that we show here, will be filled in. (Ed.)